

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Application of Linda M. Dorschner                      Art Unit 3761  
Serial No. 10/034,846  
Filed December 28, 2001  
Confirmation No. 9653  
For RATIO OF ABSORBENT AREA TO OUTER PERIPHERAL AREA FOR  
DISPOSABLE ABSORBENT ARTICLES  
Examiner Karin M. Reichle

**APPEAL BRIEF**

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May 21, 2009

**APPEAL BRIEF**

This is an appeal from the final rejection of the claims pending in the above-identified application as set forth in the final Office action dated February 12, 2009. A Notice of Appeal was filed on March 25, 2009.

**I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST**

The real party in interest in connection with the present appeal is Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. of 401 N. Lake Street, Neenah, Wisconsin 54957-0349, a corporation of the state of Delaware, owner of a 100 percent interest in the pending application.

**II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

Appellant is not aware of any pending appeals, which may be related to, directly affect or be directly affected by, or have a bearing on, the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

**III. STATUS OF CLAIMS**

Claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 are currently pending in the application for consideration. Claims 1-69, 95, 99, and 105 have been cancelled, and claims 70-82, 94,

96-98, 103, and 104 have been withdrawn from consideration. A copy of the pending claims appears in the Claims Appendix of this Brief.

The rejections of claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 are being appealed.

#### **IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS**

No amendments have been filed after the final rejection.

#### **V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER**

The following summary correlates claim elements to specific embodiments described in the application specification, but does not in any manner limit claim interpretation. Rather, the following summary is provided only to facilitate the Board's understanding of the subject matter of this appeal.

With reference to the present specification and drawings, claim 107 is directed generally to a disposable absorbent article 1 having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions 103, 101 of the article. See page 7, lines 1-5, page 28, lines 15-17, and Figs. 2-5. The article 1 has a front end, a back end, a front portion 61, a back portion 65, and a middle portion 63 interconnecting the front and back portions. See page 27, lines 8-10 and Fig. 3. The article 1 comprises a liner 5 adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body. See page 4, lines 9-13, page 8, lines 24-28, and Figs. 2-5. An outer cover 17 is in generally opposed relationship with the liner 5. See page 8, lines 24-28 and Fig. 2. The outer cover 17 has a length and a width and is stretchable along

substantially the entire length of the outer cover. See page 15, lines 26-28 and Figs. 2-5. The article 1 has a surface area 45 defined at least in part by the outer cover 17. See page 12, lines 10-11, page 27, lines 20-22 and Figs. 3-5. An absorbent core 3 is disposed between the liner 5 and the outer cover 17 and has a front edge, a back edge, (see page 8, lines 26-28 and Fig. 2) and a surface area 35 which is less than about 50% of the surface area 45 of the article 1. See page 32, lines 23-26 and Figs. 2-5. The absorbent core 3 is disposed at least in the front portion 61 and the middle portion 63 of the article 1. See page 27, lines 8-15 and Figs. 3-5. The surface area 35 of the absorbent core 3 is greater in the front portion 61 of the article 1 than in the back portion 65 and the middle portion 63. See page 28, lines 8-12 and Fig. 3. The surface area 35 of the absorbent core 3 is greater in the middle portion 63 of the article 1 than in the back portion 65. See page 28, lines 8-12 and Fig. 3. The front edge of the absorbent core 3 is in a closer proximity to the front end of the article than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article. See page 27, lines 11-15 and Figs. 2-5. At least a portion of the absorbent core 3 is bonded to the outer cover 17. See page 27, lines 10-11 and Figs. 3-5.

Claim 109 is directed generally to a disposable absorbent article 1 having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions 103, 101 of the article. See page 7, lines 1-5, page 28, lines 15-17, and Figs. 2-5. The article has a front end, a back end, a front portion 61, a back portion 65, and a middle portion 63 interconnecting the front and back portions. See page 27, lines 8-10 and

Fig. 3. The article 1 comprises a liner 5 adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body. See page 4, lines 9-13, page 8, lines 24-28, and Figs. 2-5. The liner 5 has a length and a width and is stretchable along substantially the entire length of the liner. See page 12, lines 22-24 and Fig. 2. An outer cover 17 is in generally opposed relationship with the liner 5. See page 8, lines 24-28 and Fig. 2. The article 1 has a surface area 45 defined at least in part by the liner 5. See page 12, lines 10-11, page 27, lines 20-22 and Figs. 3-5. An absorbent core 3 is disposed between the liner 5 and the outer cover 17. See page 8, lines 26-28 and Fig. 2. The absorbent core 3 has a front edge, a back edge, and a surface area 35 which is less than about 50% of the surface area 45 of the article 1. See page 32, lines 23-26 and Figs. 2-5. The absorbent core 3 is disposed at least in the front portion 61 and the middle portion 63 of the article 1. See page 27, lines 8-15 and Figs. 3-5. The surface area 35 of the absorbent core 3 is greater in the front portion 61 of the article 1 than in the back portion 65 and the middle portion 63. See page 28, lines 8-12 and Fig. 3. The surface area 35 of the absorbent core 3 is greater in the middle portion 63 of the article 1 than in the back portion 65. See page 28, lines 8-12 and Fig. 3. The front edge of the absorbent core 3 is in a closer proximity to the front end of the article 1 than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article. See page 27, lines 11-15 and Figs. 2-5. At least a portion of the absorbent core 3 is bonded to the liner 5. See page 24, lines 23-25 and Fig. 2.

Claim 111 is directed generally to a disposable absorbent article 1 having a longitudinal axis, a lateral

axis, a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions 103, 101 of the article. See page 7, lines 1-5, page 28, lines 15-17, and Figs. 2-5. The article has a front end, a back end, a front portion 61, a back portion 65, and a middle portion 63 interconnecting the front and back portions. See page 27, lines 8-10 and Fig. 3. The article 1 comprises a liner 5 adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body. See page 4, lines 9-13, page 8, lines 24-28, and Figs. 2-5. An outer cover 17 is in generally opposed relationship with the liner 5. See page 8, lines 24-28 and Fig. 2. At least one of the liner 5 and the outer cover 17 is stretchable in at least one direction. See page 12, lines 22-24, page 15, lines 26-28, and Figs. 2-5. The article 1 has a surface area 45 defined at least in part by at least one of the liner and the outer cover. See page 12, lines 10-11, page 27, lines 20-22 and Figs. 3-5. An absorbent core 3 is disposed between the liner 5 and the outer cover 17. See page 8, lines 26-28 and Fig. 2. The absorbent core 3 has a front edge, a back edge, and a surface area 35 which is less than about 50% of the surface area 45 of the article 1. See page 32, lines 23-26 and Figs. 2-5. The absorbent core 3 is disposed at least in the front portion 61 and the middle portion 63 of the article 1. See page 27, lines 8-15 and Figs. 3-5. The surface area 35 of the absorbent core 3 is greater in the front portion 61 of the article 1 than in the back portion 65 and the middle portion 63. See page 28, lines 8-12 and Fig. 3. The surface area 35 of the absorbent core 3 is greater in the middle portion 63 of the article 1 than in the back portion 65. See page 28, lines 8-12 and Fig. 3. The front edge of the absorbent core 3 is in a closer proximity to the front end of the article 1



than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article. See page 27, lines 11-15 and Figs. 2-5. The at least one of the liner 5 and the outer cover 17 extends beyond the front and back edges of the absorbent core 3 and is stretchable adjacent the front and back edges. See page 12, lines 22-24, page 15, lines 26-28, and Fig. 2.

**VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL**

A. Appellant appeals the rejection of claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph as failing to comply with the written description requirement.

B. Appellant appeals the rejection of claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,904,673 (Roe et al.) and U.S. Patent No. 4,834,785 (Alemany et al.) in view of PCT Patent Application Publication No. WO 00/38913 (Morman et al.) and EP Patent Application Publication No. 0 650 714 (Divo et al.).

**VII. ARGUMENT**

**A. Claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 are submitted to comply with the written description requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph.**

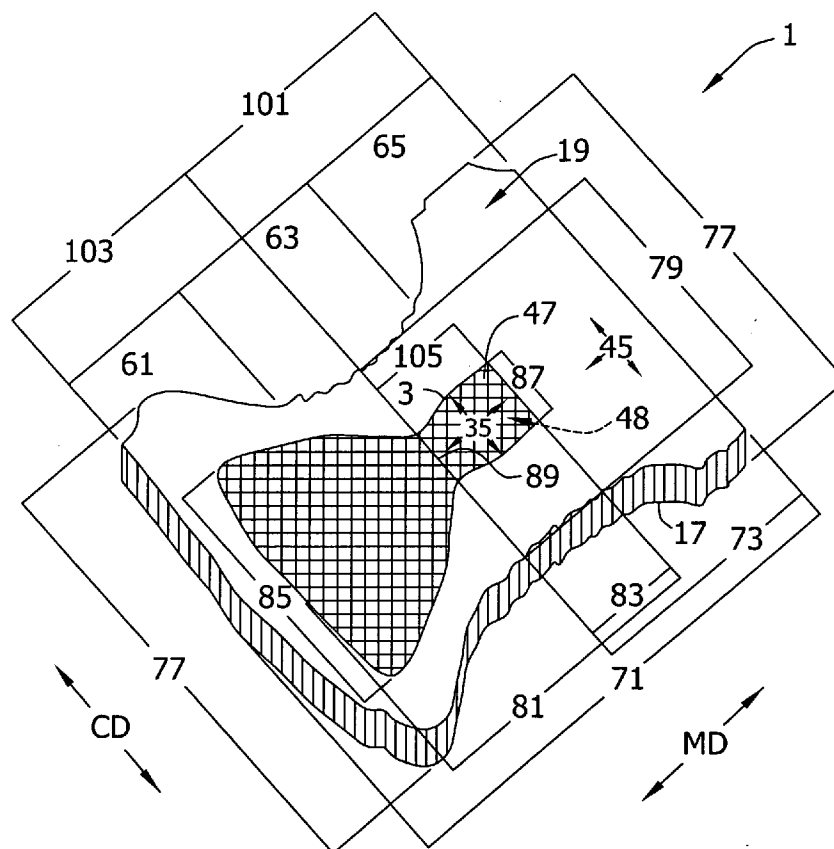
Claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The written description requirement is satisfied if the claimed invention is sufficiently detailed such that one skilled in the art can reasonably conclude that the inventor has

possession of the claimed invention. M.P.E.P. §2163 (citing *Moba, B.V. v. Diamond Automation, Inc.*, 66 U.S.P.Q. 2d 1429, 1438 (Fed. Cir. 2003)). An applicant shows possession of the claimed invention by describing the claimed invention with all of its limitations using such descriptive means as words, structures, figures, diagrams, and formulas that fully set forth the claimed invention. M.P.E.P. §2163 citing *Lockwood v. American Airlines, Inc.*, 107 F.3d 1565, 1572, 41 USPQ2d 1961, 1966 (Fed. Cir. 1997).

The Office has asserted that the application does not support the limitation that the absorbent core has a surface area that is greater in the front portion of the article than in the back portion and the middle portion, and greater in the middle portion of the article than in the back portion. See page 2, paragraph 2 of the final Office action.

Appellant respectfully disagrees. In Figure 3, the present application illustrates an absorbent article (1) that has a front portion (61), a back portion (65) and a middle portion (63) therebetween. See also page 27, lines 8-10 of appellant's specification. As can be readily seen in Figure 3, the surface area of the absorbent core (3) is greater in the front portion (61) of the article (1) than in the back portion (65), and greater in the front portion than in the middle portion (63). It is also clear from Figure 3 that the absorbent core (3) has a surface area in the middle portion (63) that is greater than the surface area in the back portion (65).

FIG. 3



The surface area of the absorbent core (3) within a given portion of the absorbent article is defined by the planar extent (i.e., length and width) of the article in that specific portion. See, e.g., page 27, lines 15-17 which provide that the surface area of the absorbent core (3) in the back half the article (1) is defined by length 83, second core width 87, and intermediate core width 89.

Thus and as can be seen in Figure 3, the surface area of the absorbent core (3) in the back portion (65) is approximately zero. That is, the absorbent core (3) does not extend or extends only slightly into the back portion

of the article (1). The absorbent core (3) does, however, extend through the middle portion (63) and front portion (61) of the absorbent article (1). Accordingly, the surface areas of the absorbent core (3) in the middle and front portions (61, 63) are greater than the surface area of the absorbent core in the back portion (65).

The surface area of the absorbent core (3) in the middle portion (63) of the article (1) is defined by multiplying the length and the width of the absorbent core in the middle portion, and the surface area of the absorbent core (3) in the front portion (61) of the article (1) is defined by multiplying the length and the width of the absorbent core in the front portion. These calculations are somewhat complicated by the fact that the width of the absorbent core varies along its length. Nevertheless, it is clear from Figure 3 that the planar extent of the absorbent core (3) is greater in the front portion (61) of the article (1) than it is in the middle portion (63) of the article. That is, the surface area of the absorbent core (3) is greater in the front portion (61) than it is in the middle portion (63). Notably, these calculations of surface area are independent of the thickness of the core.

Accordingly, appellant submits that the application sufficiently sets forth each and every element of claims 83-93, 100-102 and 106-111 in sufficient detail that one skilled in the art can reasonably conclude that the inventors had possession of the claimed invention. Claims 83-93, 100-102 and 106-111 are therefore submitted to satisfy the written description requirement of 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph.

**B. Claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 are submitted to be nonobvious in view of and patentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,904,673 (Roe et al. and U.S. Patent No. 4,834,785 (Alemany et al.) in view of PCT Patent Application Publication No. WO 00/38913 (Morman et al.) and EP Patent Application Publication No. 0 650 714 (Divo et al.).**

Claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-108

Claim 107 is directed to a disposable absorbent article having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, and a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions of the article. The article has a front end, a back end, a front portion, a back portion, and a middle portion interconnecting the front and back portions. The article comprises:

- a liner adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body;

- an outer cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner, the outer cover having a length and a width and being stretchable along substantially the entire length of the outer cover;

- the article having a surface area defined at least in part by said outer cover; and

- an absorbent core disposed between the liner and the outer cover and having a front edge, a back edge, and a surface area which is less than about 50% of the surface area of the article, the absorbent core being disposed at least in said front portion and said middle portion of the article, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said front portion of the article than in said back portion and said middle portion, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said middle portion of

the article than in said back portion, the front edge of the absorbent core being in a closer proximity to the front end of the article than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article, at least a portion of the absorbent core being bonded to said outer cover.

As explained in detail in appellant's specification, reducing the surface area of the absorbent core in various portions of the article proportionally increases the corresponding surface area of the stretchable outer cover that is unencumbered by the absorbent core. The unencumbered or lesser encumbered portions of the outer cover are able to stretch a greater amount than those that are encumbered. As a result, the back portion of the claimed article is able to stretch a greater amount than the middle and front portions. In addition, the middle portion is able to stretch a greater amount than the front portion.

The reduction in the surface area of the back and middle portions of the absorbent core, however, do not significantly compromise the performance of the absorbent core since the back and middle portions of the absorbent core play a lesser role in absorbing insults by the wearer as compared to the front portion. The surface area of the absorbent core in the front portion of the claimed article is relatively larger as compared to the middle and back portions so that the absorbency of the absorbent core is not significantly adversely affected.

As a result, the claimed absorbent article has enhanced stretch capabilities as compared to prior art articles thereby making it more comfortable and convenient

to use without significantly compromising the absorbency capabilities of the article.

Claim 107 is submitted to be nonobvious in view of and patentable over the references of record, and in particular U.S. Patent No. 5,904,673 (Roe et al.) and U.S. Patent No. 4,834,785 (Alemany et al.) in view of PCT Patent Application Publication No. WO 00/38913 (Morman et al.) and EP Patent Application Publication No. 0 650 714 (Divo et al.), in that whether considered alone or in combination the references fail to show or suggest an article having an absorbent core with a surface area that is greater in the front portion of the article than in the back portion and the middle portion, and greater in the middle portion of the article than in the back portion.

Roe et al. disclose an absorbent article (e.g., a diaper) 20 having a generally "T-shape" comprising a liquid impervious topsheet 24, a liquid impervious backsheet 26, an absorbent core 28 between the topsheet and backsheet and an extensible waist belt 32. Roe references Alemany et al. as disclosing an exemplary absorbent core 28. Alemany et al. merely discloses an absorbent member 42 having a varying thickness. However, there is no disclosure or suggestion found anywhere in Roe et al. that the absorbent core 28 has a surface area that is greater in the front portion of the article than in the back portion and the middle portion, and greater in the middle portion of the article than in the back portion. Rather, in each of the illustrated embodiments (see Figs. 1, 3 and 4 of Roe et al.), the surface area of the absorbent core 28 is substantially the same in both the front and middle portions of the diaper 20.

In the final Office action, the Office has taken the position that the absorbent member disclosed by Alemany et

al. would "necessarily and inevitably/obviously" be positioned on the absorbent article disclosed by Roe et al. such that the absorbent member has a surface area that is greater in the front portion of the article than in the back portion and the middle portion, and greater in the middle portion of the article than in the back portion. See page 6, paragraph 2 through page 7, paragraph 1 of the final Office action.

Appellant respectfully disagrees. In particular, the Office's position is based on a characterization of the thickness differential present in the absorbent core of Alemany et al. as resulting in a front region surface area being greater than the surface area in the middle and back regions of the absorbent article. However, the term "surface area" as used in the present application clearly refers to the major (i.e., inner and outer faces) of the core and is in no way a function of the absorbent core thickness. The present application is directed to the stretchability of the chassis and how it is affected by adherence of the major faces of the absorbent core to the chassis. The thickness of the core thus has no bearing on the claimed invention.

On page 27 of the present application, appellant specifically states that "[b]oth the second absorbent core length 83 and a function of the second absorbent core width 87 and the intermediate absorbent core width 89 essentially define the surface area 35 of the back one-half portion 105 of the absorbent core." Thus, appellant makes it sufficiently clear that the "surface area" referenced in the claims of the present application are a function solely of the length and width of the absorbent core (i.e., planar extent of the absorbent core) and that the thickness plays



no part in determining the surface area of the absorbent core.

Accordingly, any thickness differential present in Roe et al. and by inference Alemany et al. does not necessarily result in the claimed surface area arrangement of the front region relative to the middle and back regions. Indeed, the absorbent core length and width disclosed in Roe et al. and Alemany et al. clearly does not teach or suggest the recited surface area arrangement. The secondary references of Morman et al. and Divo et al. likewise fail to teach or suggest an article having an absorbent core with a surface area that is greater in the front portion of the article than in the back portion and the middle portion, and greater in the middle portion of the article than in the back portion.

Since each of the cited references fails to teach or suggest this feature individually, a combination of these references would likewise fail to teach or suggest this feature of claim 107.

For these reasons, claim 107 is submitted to be nonobvious in view of and patentable over Roe et al. and Alemany et al. in view of Morman et al. and Divo et al.

Claims 83-93, 100-102, 106, and 108 depend directly or indirectly from claim 107 and are submitted to be patentable over the references of record for the same reasons as claim 107.

Claims 109 and 110

Claim 109 is directed to a disposable absorbent article having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, and a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions of the article. The article has a front end, a back end, a front portion, a back portion, and a middle portion interconnecting the front and back portions. The article comprises:

a liner adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body, the liner having a length and a width and being stretchable along substantially the entire length of the liner;

an outer cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner;

the article having a surface area defined at least in part by said liner; and

an absorbent core disposed between the liner and the outer cover and having a front edge, a back edge, and a surface area which is less than about 50% of the surface area of the article, the absorbent core being disposed at least in said front portion and said middle portion of the article, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said front portion of the article than in said back portion and said middle portion, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said middle portion of the article than in said back portion, the front edge of the absorbent core being in a closer proximity to the front end of the article than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article, at least a portion of the absorbent core being bonded to said liner.

Claim 109 is submitted to be nonobvious in view of and patentable over the references of record, and in particular

Roe et al. and Alemany et al. in view of Morman et al. and Divo et al. for the same reasons as those set forth above with respect to claim 107. That is, whether considered alone or in combination the references fail to teach or suggest a disposable absorbent having an absorbent core with a surface area that is greater in the front portion of the article than in the back portion and the middle portion, and greater in the middle portion of the article than in the back portion.

Claim 110 depends directly from claim 109 and is submitted to be patentable over the references of record for at least the same reasons as claim 109.

Claim 111

Claim 111 is directed to a disposable absorbent article having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, and a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions of the article. The article has a front end, a back end, a front portion, a back portion, and a middle portion interconnecting the front and back portions. The article comprises:

a liner adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body;

an outer cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner, at least one of said liner and said outer cover being stretchable in at least one direction, the article having a surface area defined at least in part by at least one of said liner and said outer cover; and

an absorbent core disposed between the liner and the outer cover and having a front edge, a back edge, and a surface area which is less than about 50% of the surface area of the article, the absorbent core being disposed at

least in said front portion and said middle portion of the article, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said front portion of the article than in said back portion and said middle portion, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said middle portion of the article than in said back portion, the front edge of the absorbent core being in a closer proximity to the front end of the article than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article, said at least one of said liner and said outer cover extending beyond the front and back edges of the absorbent core and being stretchable adjacent said front and back edges.

Claim 111 is submitted to be nonobvious in view of and patentable over the references of record, and in particular Roe et al. and Alemany et al. in view of Morman et al. and Divo et al. for the same reasons as those set forth above with respect to claim 107. That is, whether considered alone or in combination the references fail to teach or suggest a disposable absorbent having an absorbent core with a surface area that is greater in the front portion of the article than in the back portion and the middle portion and greater in the middle portion of the article than in the back portion.

**CONCLUSION**

For the reasons stated above, appellant respectfully requests that the Office's rejections be reversed and that claims 83-93, 100-102, and 106-111 be allowed.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees due to Deposit Account No. 12-384.

Respectfully submitted,

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**CLAIMS APPENDIX**

83. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 107, wherein the outer cover is stretchable along the entire width of the outer cover.

84. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83 wherein said outer cover is capable of lateral elongation of about 10 percent when the article is subjected to a laterally directed tensile force of about 100 gmf per inch (per 2.54 cm) of width of said outer cover.

85. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83 wherein said outer cover is capable of lateral elongation of about 20 percent when the article is subjected to a laterally directed tensile force of about 100 gmf per inch (per 2.54 cm) of width of said outer cover.

86. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83 wherein said outer cover is capable of lateral elongation of about 30 percent when the article is subjected to a laterally directed tensile force of about 100 gmf per inch (per 2.54 cm) of width of said outer cover.

87. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83 wherein said outer cover is capable of lateral elongation of about 40 percent when the article is subjected to a laterally directed tensile force of about 100 gmf per inch (per 2.54 cm) of width of said outer cover.

88. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83 wherein said outer cover is capable of substantially permanent elongation laterally of said article whereby the width of said outer cover is increased at least about 17 percent when the article is subjected to a laterally directed tensile force of about 100 gmf per inch (per 2.54 cm) of width of said outer cover.

89. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83 wherein said outer cover is capable of substantially permanent elongation laterally of said article whereby the width of said outer cover is increased at least about 30 percent when the article is subjected to a laterally directed tensile force of about 100 gmf per inch (per 2.54 cm) of width of said article.

90. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83 wherein the outer cover comprises a necked laminate having at least one layer of a non-elastic

neckable material and at least one layer of a non-elastic film.

91. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 83, wherein the outer cover is elastic.

92. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 91, wherein the outer cover is elastic at least laterally of the article.

93. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 91 wherein the outer cover comprises a polypropylene spunbond laminated with styrene-isoprene-styrene-based adhesive.

100. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 106 wherein said article is a diaper.

101. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 106, wherein the surface area defined by said portion of the absorbent core is less than or equal to about 40% of the surface area of the front half of said article.

102. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 106 wherein the surface area defined by said portion of the absorbent core is less than or equal to about 30% of the surface area of the front half of said article.



106. The disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 107 wherein said front half of the article has a surface area and at least a portion of the absorbent core extends into the front half of the article, said portion of the absorbent core having a surface area which is less than about 50% of the surface area of the front half of said article.

107. A disposable absorbent article having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, and a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions of the article, said article having a front end, a back end, a front portion, a back portion, and a middle portion interconnecting the front and back portions, said article comprising:

a liner adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body;

an outer cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner, the outer cover having a length and a width and being stretchable along substantially the entire length of the outer cover;

the article having a surface area defined at least in part by said outer cover; and

an absorbent core disposed between the liner and the outer cover and having a front edge, a back edge, and a

surface area which is less than about 50% of the surface area of the article, the absorbent core being disposed at least in said front portion and said middle portion of the article, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said front portion of the article than in said back portion and said middle portion, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said middle portion of the article than in said back portion, the front edge of the absorbent core being in a closer proximity to the front end of the article than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article, at least a portion of the absorbent core being bonded to said outer cover.

108. A disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 107 wherein the liner has a length and a width, said liner being stretchable along substantially the entire length of the liner.

109. A disposable absorbent article having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, and a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions of the article, said article having a front end, a back end, a front portion, a back portion, and a middle portion interconnecting the front and back portions, the article comprising:

a liner adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body, the liner having a length and a width and being stretchable along substantially the entire length of the liner;

an outer cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner;

the article having a surface area defined at least in part by said liner; and

an absorbent core disposed between the liner and the outer cover and having a front edge, a back edge, and a surface area which is less than about 50% of the surface area of the article, the absorbent core being disposed at least in said front portion and said middle portion of the article, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said front portion of the article than in said back portion and said middle portion, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said middle portion of the article than in said back portion, the front edge of the absorbent core being in a closer proximity to the front end of the article than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article, at least a portion of the absorbent core being bonded to said liner.

110. A disposable absorbent article as set forth in claim 108 wherein said outer cover has a length and a width, said outer cover being stretchable along substantially the entire length of the outer cover.

111. A disposable absorbent article having a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis, and a lateral centerline generally defining longitudinal front and back regions of the article, said article having a front end, a back end, a front portion, a back portion, and a middle portion interconnecting the front and back portions, the article comprising:

a liner adapted for contiguous relationship with a wearer's body;

an outer cover in generally opposed relationship with the liner, at least one of said liner and said outer cover being stretchable in at least one direction, the article having a surface area defined at least in part by at least one of said liner and said outer cover; and

an absorbent core disposed between the liner and the outer cover and having a front edge, a back edge, and a surface area which is less than about 50% of the surface area of the article, the absorbent core being disposed at least in said front portion and said middle portion of the article, the surface area of the absorbent core being

greater in said front portion of the article than in said back portion and said middle portion, the surface area of the absorbent core being greater in said middle portion of the article than in said back portion, the front edge of the absorbent core being in a closer proximity to the front end of the article than the back edge of the absorbent core is to the back end of the article, said at least one of said liner and said outer cover extending beyond the front and back edges of the absorbent core and being stretchable adjacent said front and back edges.

**EVIDENCE APPENDIX**

None.

**RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX**

None.